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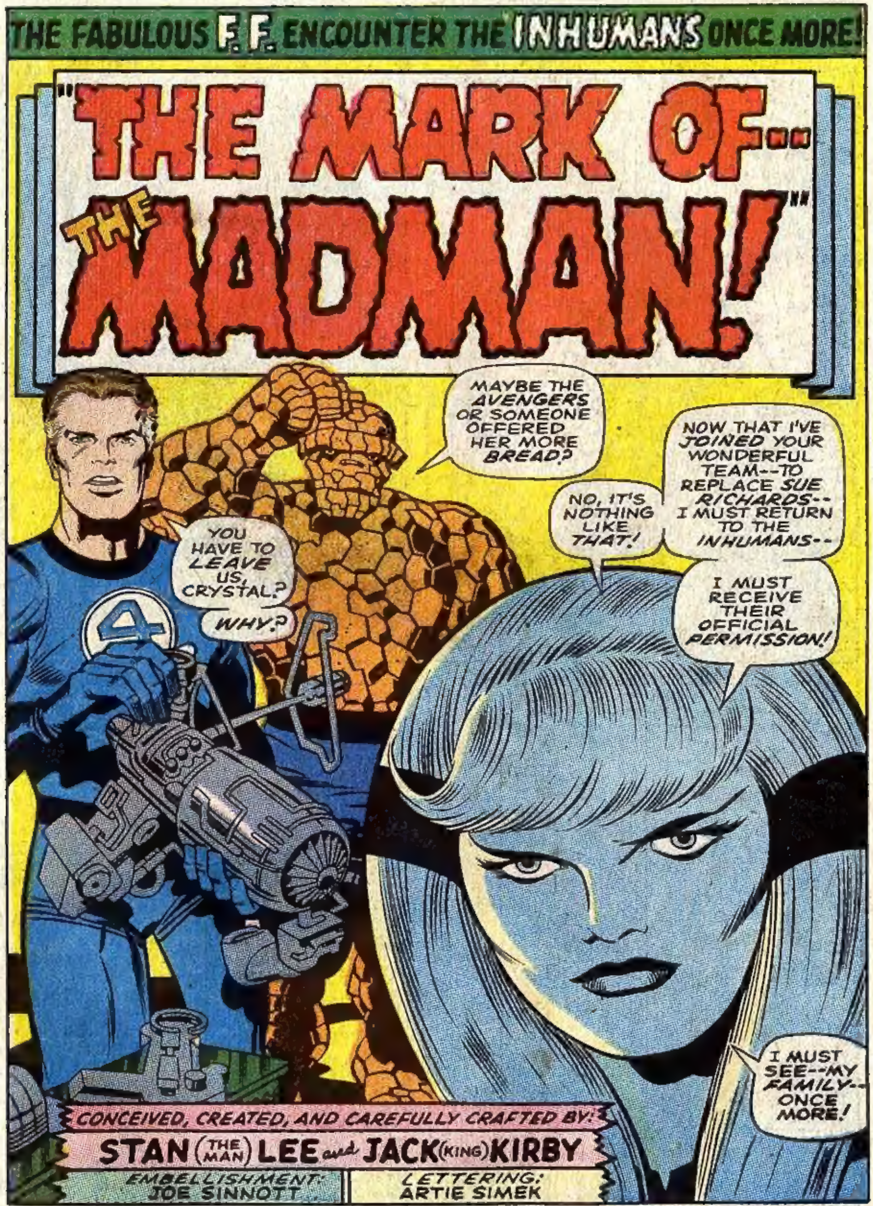

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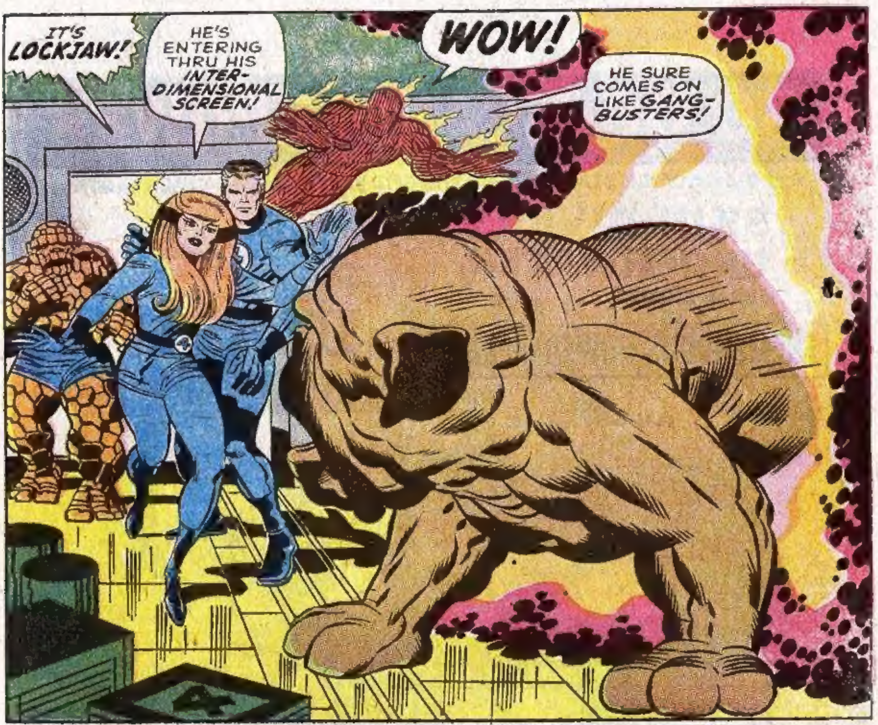
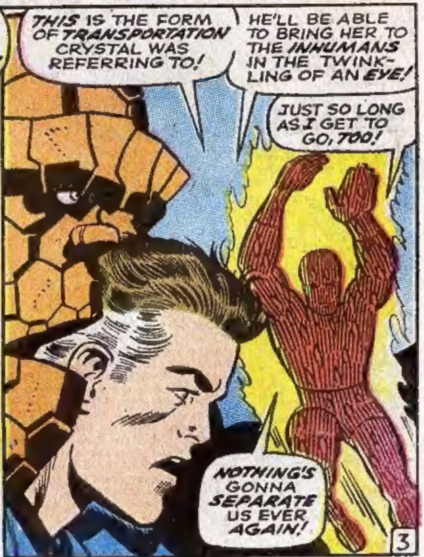
I SHOULD HAVE HAVE THOUGHT OF THAT, YOUNG LADY!
AFTER ALL, YOU'RE STILL A MINOR!
WHAT IF BLACK BOLT 'N HIS BLUSHIN' BUDDIES TELL YA NO?
HEY, WAIT A MINNIT!
I DARE NOT-- EVEN THINK-- OF THAT!
WELL, I SUPPOSE THERE'S ONLY ONE WAY TO FIND OUT--
HOW DO YOU PROPOSE TO LOCATE THEM, CRYSTAL?
WE HAVE OUR OWN SPECIAL METHODS--OF CONTACTING EACH OTHER!
HOW'S ABOUT JUNIOR?
WHAT'S OL' HOT-HEAD GONNA SAY ABOUT THIS?
THEN, AS IF IN ANSWER TO BEN GRIMM'S QUERY--
REED! BEN! COME A'RUNNIN'!
THERE'S SOMETHING GOING ON-- IN THE STORAGE ROOM!
LOOK! THERE IT GOES AGAIN!
A SUDDEN BURST OF LIGHT--
VIBRATING WITH A STRANGE, GLOWING ENERGY!
LISTEN! I HEAR SOMETHIN' GROWLIN'!
WAIT! I--I KNOW WHAT IT IS--!
2





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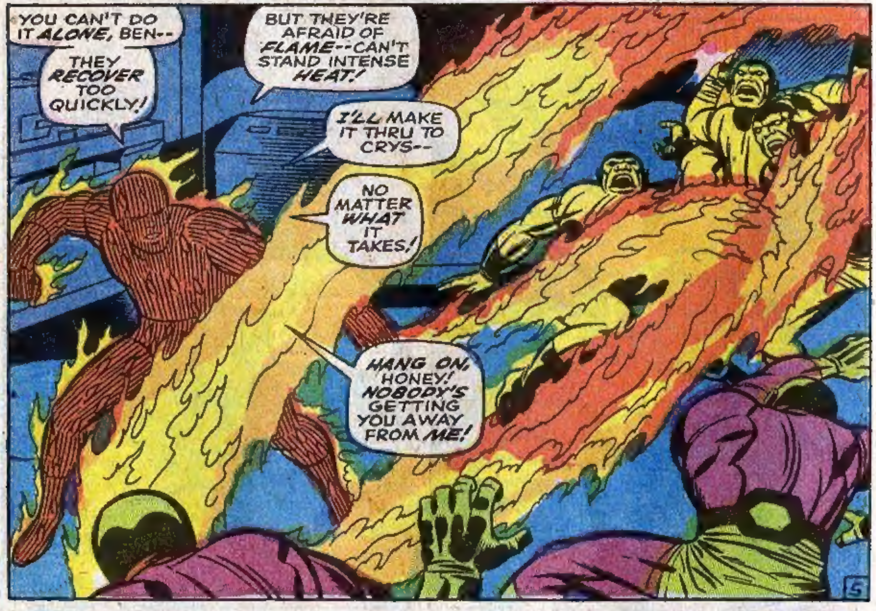
BUT ALAS, WE FEAR THAT JOHNNY'S DRAMATIC PREDICTION MAY BE SOME-WHAT LESS THAN TOTALLY ACCURATE! FOR, A SPLIT-SECOND LATER--
WAIT! SOMEONE ELSE IS COMING THRU THE SCREEN!
THE WAY LOCKJAW IS SNARLING--TREMBLING--
WHOEVER THEY ARE--THEY REPRESENT--DANGER!
THEY'RE GETTIN' CLEAR NOW!
I CAN ALMOST RECOGNIZE 'EM--!
THEY'RE ALPHA PRIMITIVES--THE INHUMANS' DEADLY DRONE RACE!
THEY'RE TRYING TO ABDUCT ME!
DON'T FIGHT THEM! IT'S HOPELESS! THEY CAN'T BE BEATEN!
YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND!
THERE ARE TOO MANY OF THEM!
DON'T FIGHT THEM?
WE CAN'T STAND BY--AND SEE YOU WRESTED FROM US!
BEN! JOHNNY! LET'S GO!
YOU'RE ONE OF US NOW, LADY--
AND THE FF TAKES CARE OF ITS OWN!
4

AND IN CASE YA THINK STRETCHO'S KIDDIN'--
IT'S CLOBBERIN' TIME!


YOU CAN'T DO IT ALONE, BEN--
THEY RECOVER TOO QUICKLY!
BUT THEY'RE AFRAID OF FLAME--CAN'T STAND INTENSE HEAT!
I'LL MAKE IT THRU TO CRYS--
NO MATTER WHAT IT TAKES!
HANG ON, HONEY! NOBODY'S GETTING YOU AWAY FROM ME!
5

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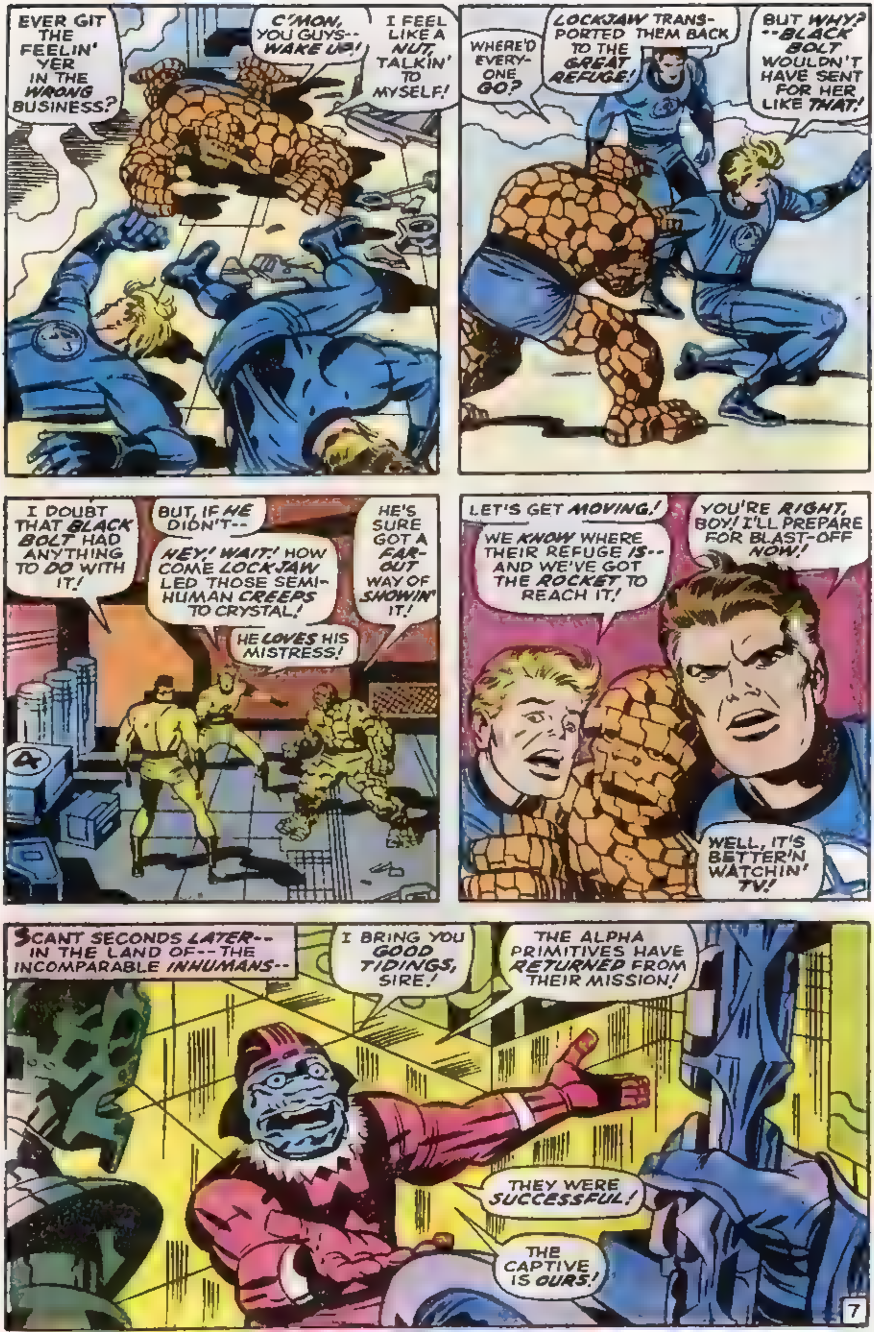
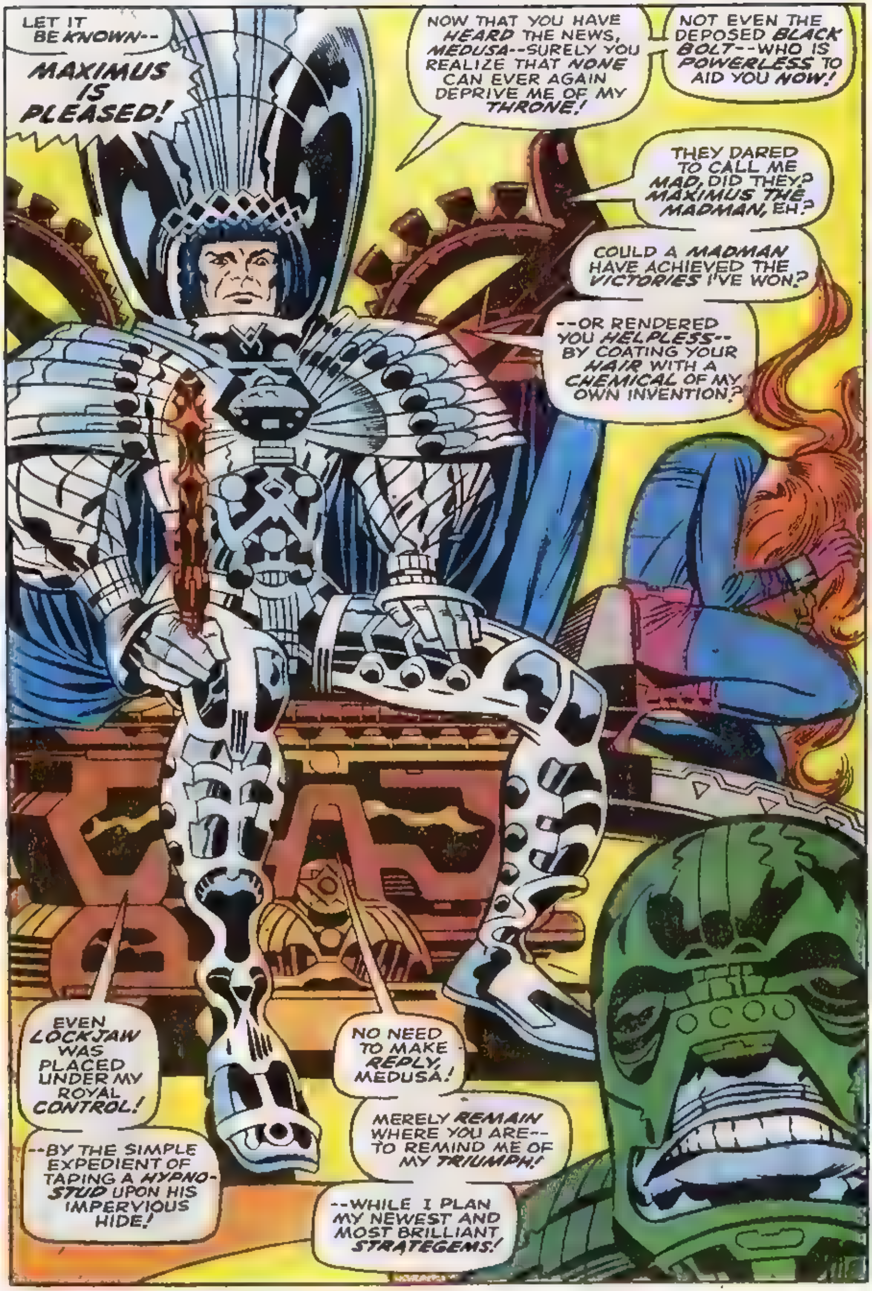

EVER GIT THE FEELIN' YER IN THE WRONG BUSINESS?
C'MON, YOU GUYS-- WAKE UP!
I FEEL LIKE A NUT, TALKIN' TO MYSELF!
WHERE'D EVERY-ONE GO?
LOCKJAW TRANS-PORTED THEM BACK TO THE GREAT REFUGE!
BUT WHY? --BLACK BOLT WOULDN'T HAVE SENT FOR HER LIKE THAT!
I DOUBT THAT BLACK BOLT HAD ANYTHING TO DO WITH IT!
BUT, IF HE DIDN'T--
HEY! WAIT! HOW COME LOCKJAW LED THOSE SEMI-HUMAN CREEPS TO CRYSTAL!
HE'S SURE GOT A FAR-OUT WAY OF SHOWIN' IT!
HE LOVES HIS MISTRESS!
LET'S GET MOVING!
WE KNOW WHERE THEIR REFUGE IS-- AND WE'VE GOT THE ROCKET TO REACH IT!
YOU'RE RIGHT, BOY! I'LL PREPARE FOR BLAST-OFF NOW!
WELL, IT'S BETTER'N WATCHIN' TV!
SCANT SECONDS LATER-- IN THE LAND OF-- THE INCOMPARABLE INHUMANS--
I BRING YOU GOOD TIDINGS, SIRE!
THE ALPHA PRIMITIVES HAVE RETURNED FROM THEIR MISSION!
THEY WERE SUCCESSFUL!
THE CAPTIVE IS OURS!
7


LET IT BE KNOWN--
MAXIMUS IS PLEASED!
NOW THAT YOU HAVE HEARD THE NEWS, MEDUSA--SURELY YOU REALIZE THAT NONE CAN EVER AGAIN DEPRIVE ME OF MY THRONE!
NOT EVEN THE DEPOSED BLACK BOLT--WHO IS POWERLESS TO AID YOU NOW!
THEY DARED TO CALL ME MAD, DID THEY? MAXIMUS THE MADMAN, EH?
COULD A MADMAN HAVE ACHIEVED THE VICTORIES I'VE WON?
--OR RENDERED YOU HELPLESS--BY COATING YOUR HAIR WITH A CHEMICAL OF MY OWN INVENTION?
EVEN LOCKJAW WAS PLACED UNDER MY ROYAL CONTROL!
--BY THE SIMPLE EXPEDIENT OF TAPING A HYPNO-STUD UPON HIS IMPERVIOUS HIDE!
NO NEED TO MAKE REPLY, MEDUSA!
MERELY REMAIN WHERE YOU ARE--TO REMIND ME OF MY TRIUMPH!
--WHILE I PLAN MY NEWEST AND MOST BRILLIANT STRATEGEMS!

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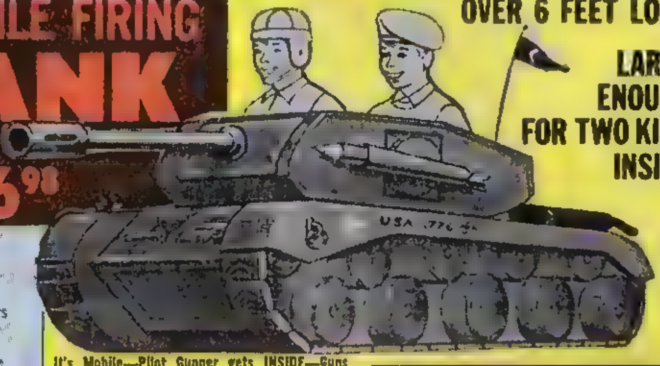

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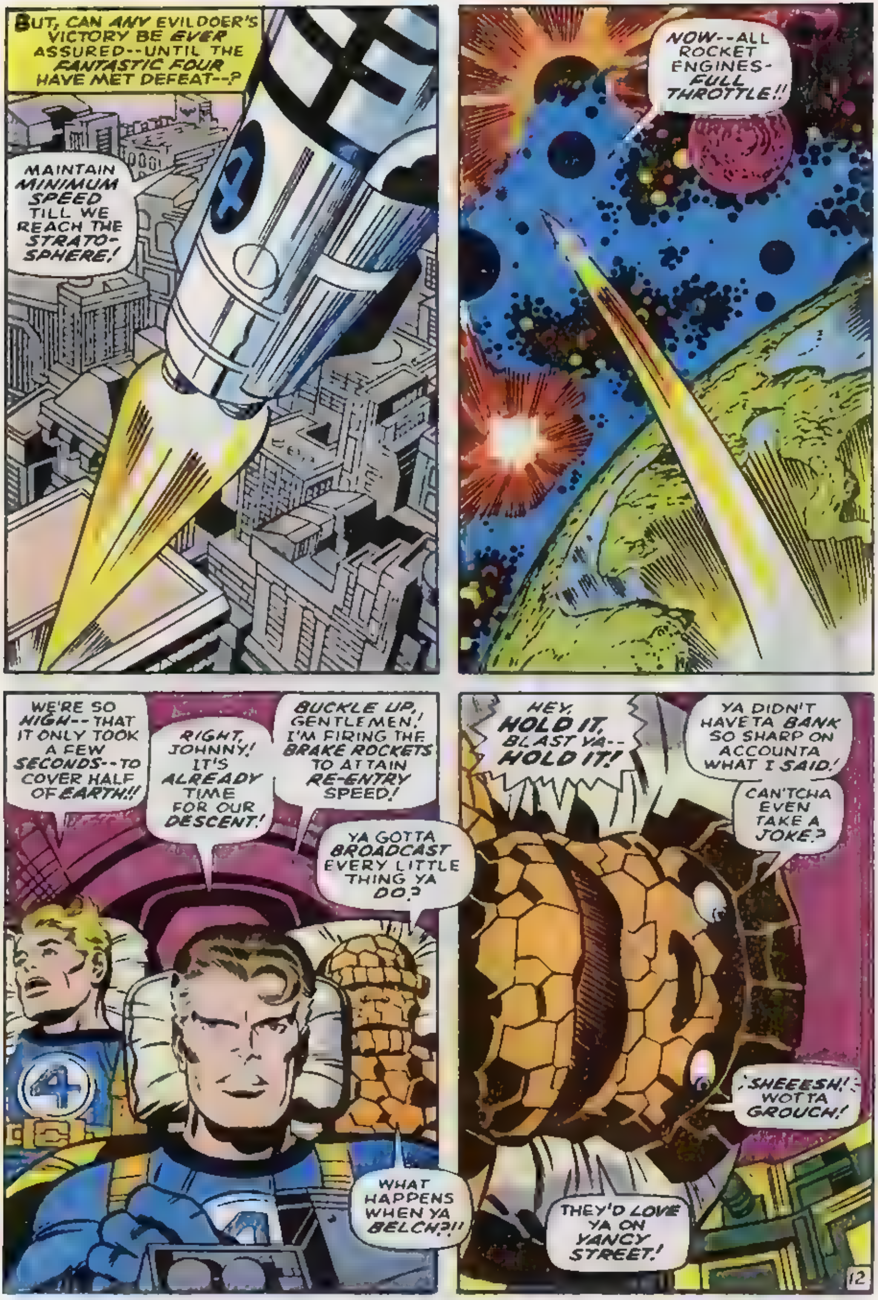
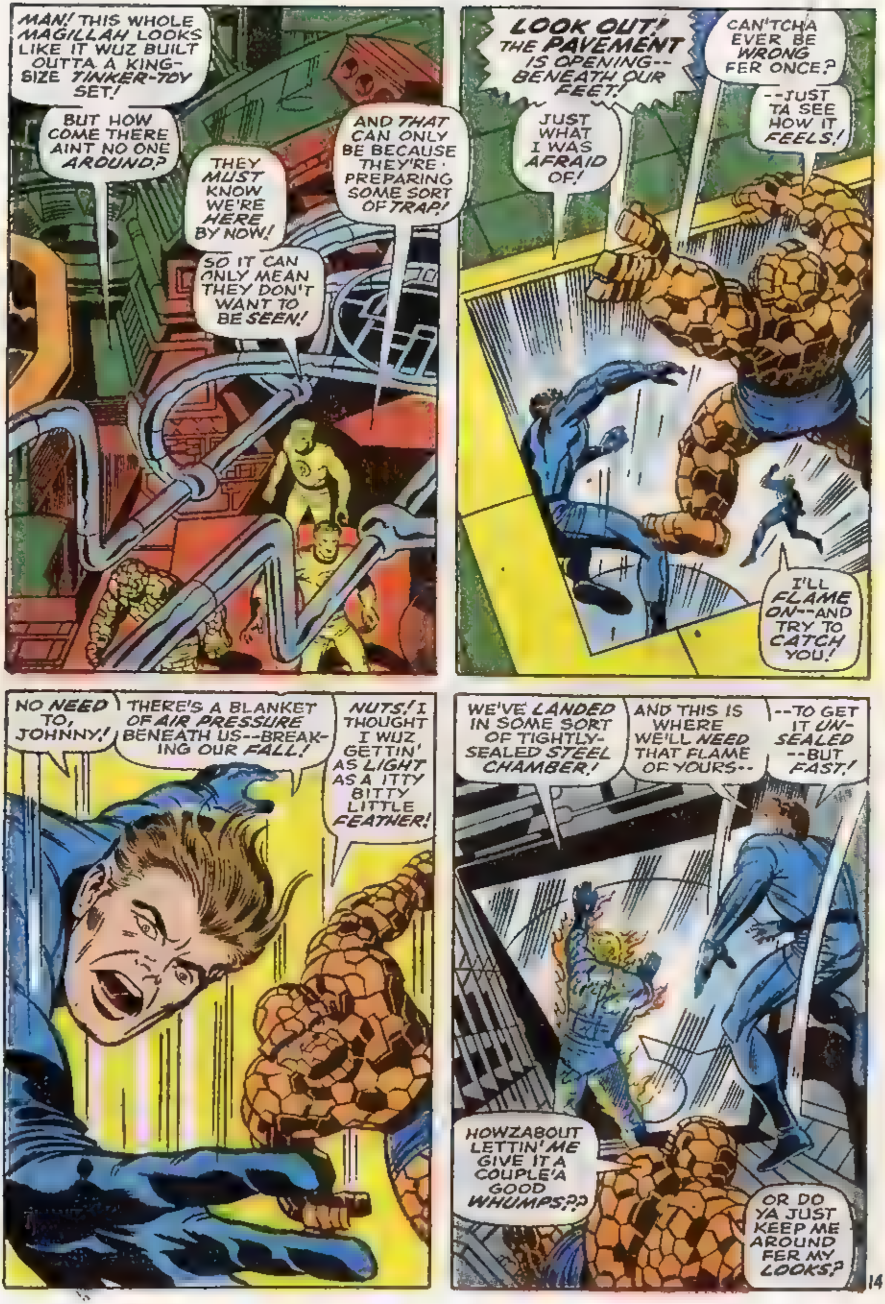
I CAUTION YOU, DEAR COUSIN--PLAN NO PRECIPITATE ACTION!
YOU WILL ONLY SUCCEED IN ENDANGERING THE LIVES OF THOSE YOU LOVE MOST!
I DO NOT KNOW HOW YOU MANAGED TO USURP THE THRONE OF BLACK BOLT!
BUT, AS SOON AS HE--AS WELL AS GORGON, AND KARNAK, AND THE OTHERS LEARN OF IT--
ALAS FOR YOU, MY DEAR! THEY ALREADY KNOW!
THEN HOW? WHY? THEY'D NEVER ALLOW MAXIMUS TO COMMIT SO MONSTROUS AN ACT!
ANSWER HER, MEDUSA!
HE--PLANNED TOO WELL! HE SAPPED OUR WILLS--WITH HIS ACCURSED HYPNO-POTIONS!
AND NOW--SEE WHAT ELSE I HAVE TO SHOW YOU--!!
CLICK!
10

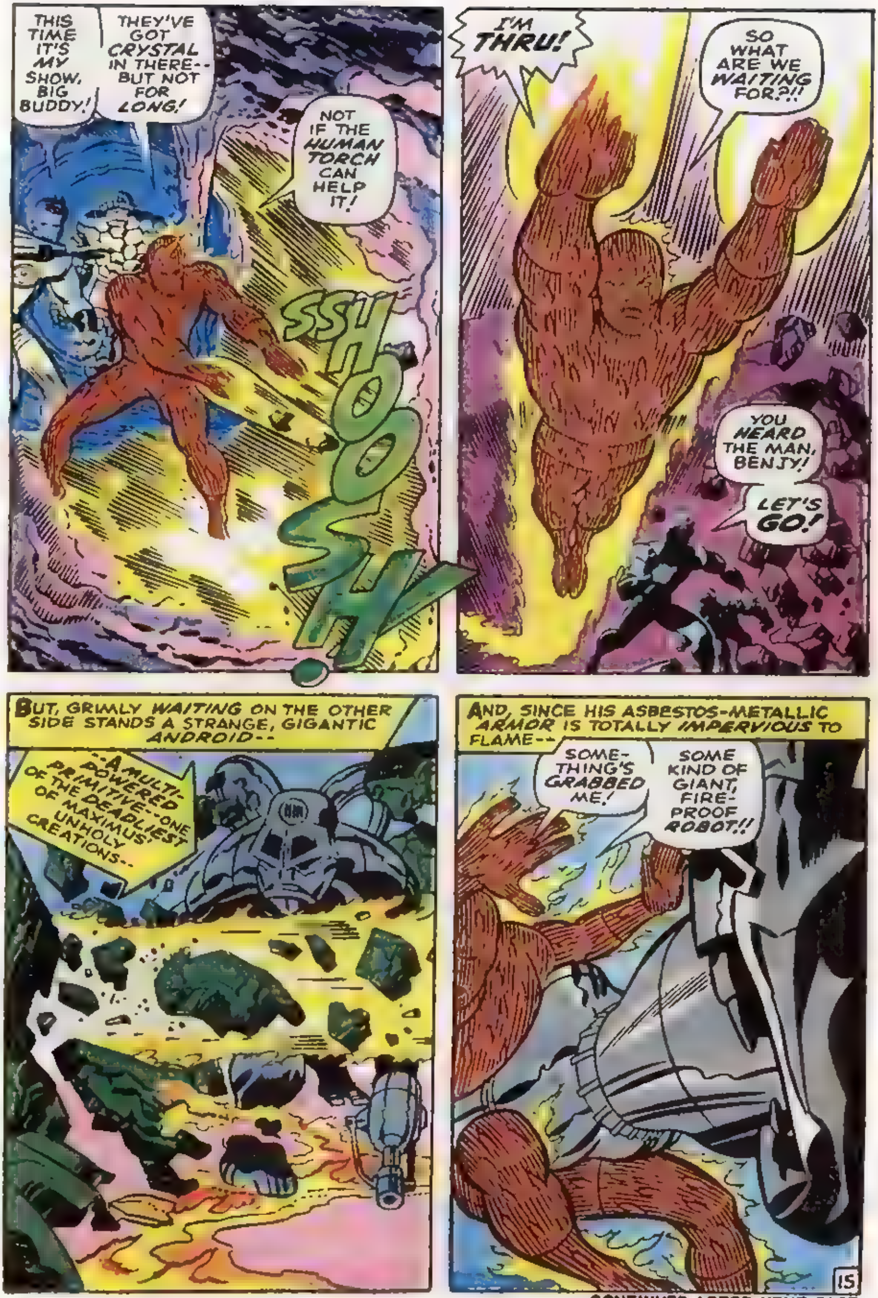
YOUR ONCE-MIGHTY COUSIN--YOUR NOW-DEPOSED EX-KING--TRAPPED IN A FORCE FIELD PRISON OF MY OWN DESIGN!
--TOGETHER WITH THE EQUALLY-HELPLESS GORGON, TRITON, AND KARNAK!!
OH NO!! NO!
THIS MEANS--MAXIMUS HAS WON--AT LAST!
11



BUT, CAN ANY EVILDOER'S VICTORY BE EVER ASSURED--UNTIL THE FANTASTIC FOUR HAVE MET DEFEAT--?
MAINTAIN MINIMUM SPEED TILL WE REACH THE STRATO-SPHERE!
NOW--ALL ROCKET ENGINES-FULL THROTTLE!!
WE'RE SO HIGH--THAT IT ONLY TOOK A FEW SECONDS--TO COVER HALF OF EARTH!!
RIGHT, JOHNNY! IT'S ALREADY TIME FOR OUR DESCENT!
BUCKLE UP, GENTLEMEN! I'M FIRING THE BRAKE ROCKETS TO ATTAIN RE-ENTRY SPEED!
YA GOTTA BROADCAST EVERY LITTLE THING YA DO?
WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YA BELCH?!!
HEY, HOLD IT, BLAST YA--HOLD IT!
YA DIDN'T HAVETA BANK SO SHARP ON ACCOUNTA WHAT I SAID!
CAN'TCHA EVEN TAKE A JOKE?
SHEEESH! WOTTA GROUCH!
THEY'D LOVE YA ON YANCY STREET!
12

KNOCK IT OFF, BEN!
I DON'T WANT ANY DISTRACTIONS NOW!
LANDING BETWEEN THESE HIMALAYAN PEAKS IS RISKY BUSINESS!
RELEASE THE LANDING WHEELS, OLD FRIEND!
THAT'S IT!
I'M BRINGING HER IN HORIZONTALLY --JUST IN CASE!
LOOK! A BIRD-MAN!! THE FIRST INHUMAN WE'VE SIGHTED!
THAT MEANS YOU BROUGHT US HERE RIGHT ON TARGET, LEADER MAN!
WE MUST BE RIGHT ON TOP OF THEIR GREAT REFUGE!
IT MEANS EVEN MORE THAN THAT, JOHNNY--!
IT MEANS HE'S ABOUT TO SPREAD THE ALARM--TO TELL THEM WE'RE HERE!
BUT WHY, REED?
BLACK BOLT AND THE OTHERS KNOW US! THEY KNOW WE'RE FRIENDS!
WE'LL HAVE TO GO IN FIGHTING!
WELL, NOW AINT THAT A CRYIN' SHAME!
DON'T YOU SEE, LAD? BLACK BOLT WOULD NEVER HAVE SEIZED CRYSTAL!
THAT MEANS SOMEONE ELSE--SOMEONE HOSTILE--IS IN COMMAND!
THEN--IT MEANS SHE'S IN GREATER DANGER THAN I THOUGHT!
LOOK! PORTIONS OF THE GREAT BARRIER, WHICH WE ONCE DESTROYED*, STILL REMAIN AS GRIM REMINDERS!
*IT HAPPENED A FEW YEARS AGO, REMEMBER?--WHEN THE FF FINALLY REUNITED CRYS AND JOHNNY! --STAN.
13


MAN! THIS WHOLE MAGILLAH LOOKS LIKE IT WUZ BUILT OUTTA A KING-SIZE TINKER-TOY SET!
BUT HOW COME THERE AINT NO ONE AROUND?
THEY MUST KNOW WE'RE HERE BY NOW!
SO IT CAN ONLY MEAN THEY DON'T WANT TO BE SEEN!
AND THAT CAN ONLY BE BECAUSE THEY'RE PREPARING SOME SORT OF TRAP!
LOOK OUT! THE PAVEMENT IS OPENING-- BENEATH OUR FEET!
JUST WHAT I WAS AFRAID OF!
CAN'TCHA EVER BE WRONG FER ONCE?
--JUST TA SEE HOW IT FEELS!
I'LL FLAME ON--AND TRY TO CATCH YOU!
NO NEED TO, JOHNNY!
THERE'S A BLANKET OF AIR PRESSURE BENEATH US--BREAKING OUR FALL!
NUTS! I THOUGHT I WUZ GETTIN' AS LIGHT AS A ITTY BITTY LITTLE FEATHER!
WE'VE LANDED IN SOME SORT OF TIGHTLY-SEALED STEEL CHAMBER!
AND THIS IS WHERE WE'LL NEED THAT FLAME OF YOURS--
--TO GET IT UN-SEALED --BUT FAST!
HOWZABOUT LETTIN' ME GIVE IT A COUPLE'A GOOD WHUMPS??
OR DO YA JUST KEEP ME AROUND FER MY LOOKS?



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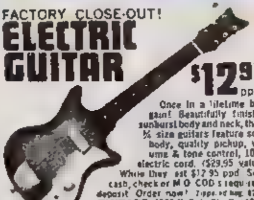

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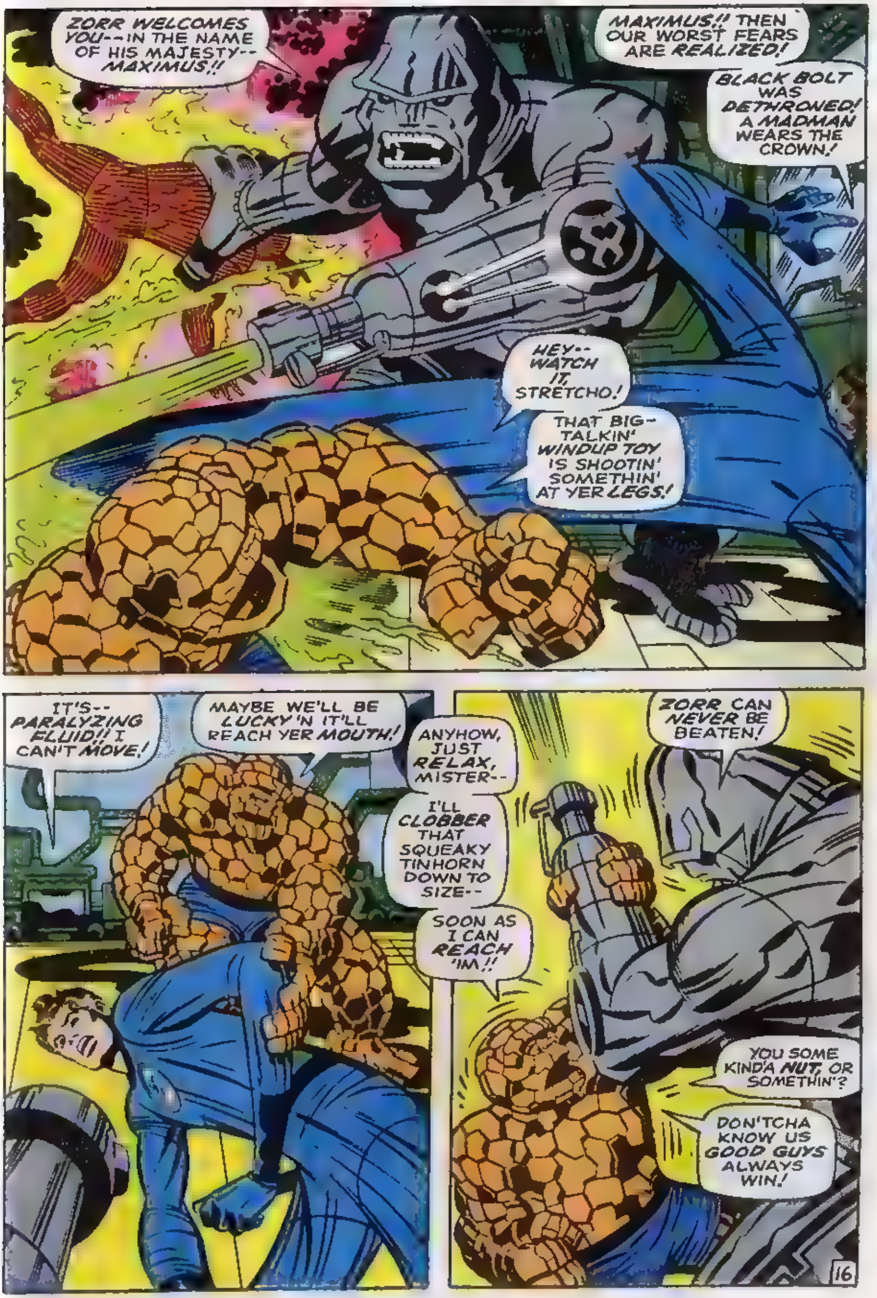
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17

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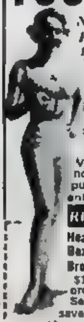

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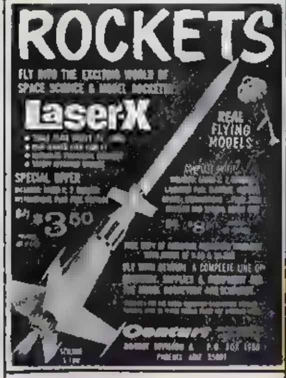

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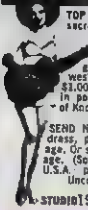

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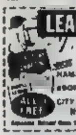

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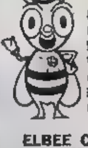

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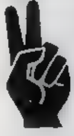

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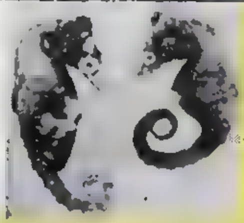

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THE FANTASTIC FOUR ARE NOT YET DEFEATED-- NOT WHILE ONE MEMBER CAN STILL FIGHT ON!
AND, SO LONG AS CRYSTAL LIVES--ONE MEMBER SHALL FIGHT ON!
WHILE, WITHIN THE GLASSY, FORCE-FIELD PRISON CAGE--
SHE SHOULD NOT HAVE SAID THAT!
MAXIMUS WILL NOT STOP AT-- MURDER--IF IT SERVES HIS PURPOSE!
IF WE COULD BUT SHATTER THIS ACCURSED CAGE!
LET KARNAK TRY AGAIN--!
BUT, NOT EVEN THE GREATEST SUPER-POWERED MASTER OF KARATE WHO EVER LIVED CAN MAKE A DENT IN THE HANDIWORK OF MAXIMUS--!!
IT IS IMPOSSIBLE!
THE SUBSTANCE IS LIKE NONE OTHER ON EARTH!
IT CANNOT BE SHATTERED!
SEE HOW TOTALLY HELPLESS THEY ARE!
AND, THE SAME MAGNIFICENT SCIENCE THAT IMPRISONS THEM WILL SOON MAKE MY EMPIRE THE UNDISPUTED MASTER OF ALL THE WORLD!
THE EMPIRE OF INHUMANS --UNDER THE VICTORIOUS LEADERSHIP OF-- MAXIMUS!!
19

NEVER! YOU'LL NEVER LEAD OUR PEOPLE--
WHAT?? YOU DARE HURL YOUR ELEMENTAL POWERS AGAINST YOUR RIGHTFUL KING?!!
BUT, IN TRUTH, I DO NOT NEED MY SUB-IONIC FORCE FIELD!
DID YOU THINK I WOULD LEAVE MYSELF CARELESSLY UNPROTECTED?
NOT WHILE THE FANTASTIC FOUR WILL SERVE ME--AS HOSTAGES!
IF YOU DARE DEFY ME ONCE AGAIN--
THEY WILL ALL BE PUT TO DEATH!
--INCLUDING THE CALLOW YOUTH WHO HAS WON YOUR UNTHINKING HEART!
BUT I AM NOT CONTENT TO MERELY RULE THE INHUMANS!
ALL WHO LIVE MUST BOW TO ME--AND BOW THEY SHALL!
NOW COME. --AND I WILL SHOW YOU WHY--!
COME--AND SEE WHY MAXIMUS IS DESTINED TO RULE--THE ENTIRE HUMAN RACE!
NO LONGER WILL THEY CALL ME MADMAN!
FOR THIS IS MY GREATEST WEAPON!
AN UNLIMITED RANGE HYPNO-GUN--WHICH SOON SHALL SEND ITS MATCHLESS RAYS ACROSS THE ENTIRE PLANET!
THEN, UNDER MY LEADERSHIP--THE INHUMANS WILL HAVE REALIZED THEIR SUPREME DESTINY --AT LAST!
NEXT
SHALL MAN SURVIVE?
20

A TITANIC TREASURE-TROVE OF TRAUMATICALLY TEMPTING TID-BITS, TASTEFULLY TOSSED TOGETHER TO TEASE AND TANTALIZE THEE!

We've got news a'plenty for you this month, so let's not waste a minute! Here we GOOOOOO—!

ITEM: Well, it finally happened! The love-bug bit our own romantic ROY THOMAS, and he actually took the plunge! Yep, the Rascally One was recently married to as pretty a gal as you can find outside of a Jazzy Johnny drawing! So, if he happens to name his next few dozen heroines Jean — don't be too surprised, hear? And the whole misty-eyed Bullpen wishes the ca-vortin' couple many many long years of health, happiness, and superhero hi-jinx! Now, back to the typewriter, R.T.!

ITEM: Suddenly, everyone's talking about ol' Green-skin again! Could it be because SMILIN' STAN himself is writing the yarns once more — or because of the pulsating power of HAPPY HERBY TRIMPY's pulse-pounding pencilling? We're not sure, but we'll tell you this — the incredible HULK has never been greater, and judging by the fan mail, we're selling more copies than we're printing! Hooo boy!

ITEM: Looks like romance is *really* in the air around the hallowed halls of Marvel! JOLLY JACK KIRBY'S handsome son Neal has just announced his engagement, and will probably have already tied the knot by the time you read these words! Heartiest congratulations to the King and Roz — and, after his winning fandom's most coveted award for World's Best Comic Book Penciller, it seems there's never a dull moment around the Kirby clan's household!

ITEM: Didja see the colorful cover of THE SPECTACULAR SPIDER-MAN #2, now on sale? Not being content to sketch the storyboards for the whole zingy issue, ol' RING-A-DING ROMITA actually did the cover painting himself! If you wanna see living proof why Johnny's one of the best, don't dare miss it! (And the story's not so bad, either!)

ITEM: The comic world is still agog about Marvel latching onto AWESOME ARNOLD DRAKE! You can see his sensational scripting in NOT BRAND ECHH, MARVEL SUPERHEROES, X-MEN, and CAPTAIN MARVEL, to name a few mildly magnificent masterworks we've been tossing atcha! Both he and ARTFUL ARCHIE GOODWIN have turned into a couple of Bullpen Bombshells, joining the ranks of STAN (THE MAN) LEE, RASCALLY ROY, and GROOVY GARY FRIEDRICH (who'll be back from the coast 'most any day now) . . . bolstering the greatest lineup of comic magazine writing talent ever assembled under one roof! And wait till you see the drama-drenched yarns of EARNEST ERNIE HART — but more about him in the months to come . . .

ITEM: Remember how great DR. STRANGE used to be? Well, dig it now — with GENIAL GENE COLAN and TERRIFIC TOMMY PALMER handling the art chores, it's just gotta be the most psychedelic saga of all time! And, speaking of that, wait'll you see what JAUNTY JIM STERANKO has up his sleeve for Marveldom Assembled when he finishes the latest X-MEN. He's working on another great feature which promises to earn even more raves than Jim's never-to-be-forgotten SHIELD spectaculars! And, speaking of SHIELD, how about the astonishing artwork of FEARLESS FRANKIE SPRINGER? If you think he's good now — wait'll we let him buy a brand new pencil!

ITEM: No mention of Marvel's amazing art staff would be complete without including the prize-winning productions of BIG JOHN BUSCEMA! This rugged rough-and-ready ranny is setting fandom on its collective ear with the mouth-watering masterpieces he's been turning out for SILVER SURFER, THE AVENGERS, and SUB-MARINER — And our thanks to MARVELOUS MARIE SEVERIN for pinch-hitting on the most recent episode of Prince Namor, while Big John took a long-delayed vacation. JOHN SEVERIN'S little sis is probably the most versatile illustrator we know. She can hold her own with any action-artist in the biz and also does the best gag cartoons this side of Peanuts!

FRUSTRATION DEPT.! We wanted to tell you about the latest exploits of DAZZLING DONNIE HECK, WONDROUS WERNER ROTH, LONESOME GEORGE TUSKA, DARLIN' DICK AYERS, HEROIC HOWIE PURCELL, LARRUPIN' LARRY LIEBER, and DANDY DAN ADKINS, but we've just run out of room! And with that, we'll say NIL NISI OPTIMUS till next ish!

THE MIGHTY MARVEL CHECKLIST

Marvel-ous Mags On Sale Right Now!

SPIDER-MAN #68: A protest riot on campus! Brand new characters! And a most deadly villain!

MARVEL SUPER-HEROES #18: From a millenium away across the star swept cosmos come the Guardians of the Galaxy!

AVENGERS #59: The Wasp has a new suitor, and the Avengers a new nemesis . . . Yellowjacket!

X-MEN #51: The Devil Has a Daughter! — and guess what teenage icicle is batty for her!

DAREDEVIL #47: A blinded vet! A courtroom bombshell! The secret of Karen Page!

MIGHTY THOR #159: Where was Thor before Dr. Blake found the hammer? Here's the answer at last!

CAPTAIN AMERICA #109: A brand-new version, in complete detail, of Cap's amazing origin!

INCREDIBLE HULK #111: Trapped in space by a mysterious foe — Green-Skin finds another world!

IRON MAN #9: Here comes the Green Goliath . . . and if you don't know who we mean — you will!

SUB-MARINER #9: Can even mighty Namor save his sunken empire from the deadly Spell of the Serpent?

CAPTAIN MARVEL #9: Twin menaces from two different worlds menace our star-crossed crusader! A gasser!

NICK FURY, AGENT OF SHIELD #8: From the Caves of Hercules comes a threat to SHIELD . . . and the world!

DR. STRANGE #175: They clash by night . . . our mystic master, and the sinister Sons of Satannish!

SGT. FURY #61: Happy Sam's a hostage . . . and that's the Howlers' signal to go . . . go . . . GO!

CAPTAIN SAVAGE #9: The new Savage is here . . . and no war-mag buff will want to miss a minute!

MARVEL TALES #18: Spidey . . . Thor, and the Human Torch! Three of Marvel's mightiest!

MILLIE THE MODEL #166: Got a sister? Girl friend? Wife? This is the laff riot for HER!

MIGHTY MARVEL WESTERN #2: The greatest frontier action with the Rawhide Kid, Kid Colt and the Two-Gun Kid!

STAN'S SOAPBOX

The next time anyone puts you down for reading a comic mag, try hitting him with this little soliloquy which I've used on various radio and TV guest appearances in the past few months:

"Comic books are a medium of communication — just as television and motion pictures are. All three employ words and pictures, and all must be judged on their individual merits. A story is a story, whether presented between two covers or on a screen. If the words have dramatic impact, if the pictures are visually appealing, if the theme is emotionally relevant, then certainly it is worthy of a reader's attention. However, if the quality is lacking, then it rates little consideration. Isn't this equally true of a TV program, a Broadway show, a motion picture, or any other form of entertainment? All we at Marvel ask is that our product be judged on the basis of quality — a quality which we sincerely believe is equal to that found in any other comparable media.

Marvel Comics today are produced by the finest creative talent available. Read them first . . . and then decide.

Excelsior!

Smiley

And, STILL ON SALE—

SPECTACULAR SPIDER-MAN #2: The truth about the uncanny Green Goblin — in full, dazzling color!

SILVER SURFER #3: Featuring Mephisto, the most awesome super-villain of our age!

NOT BRAND ECHH #11: The nuttiest ish ever — with King Konk and a cavortin', kookie cast of cockeyed characters!

MARVEL COLLECTORS' ITEM CLASSICS #18: The F.F., Doc Strange, and Iron Man . . . need we say more?

RAWHIDE KID #67: Marvel's western winner becomes . . . "The Hostage of Hungry Hills!" Don't miss it!

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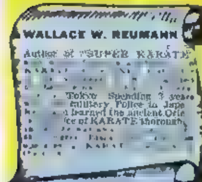

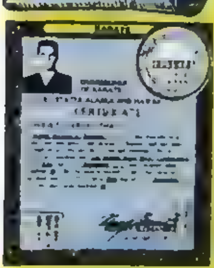

I spent 3 years in Japan learning the little known Oriental art of KARATE and was awarded the 4th Degree Black Belt—symbol of the highest possible proficiency. Now I'm ready to show you every [illegible] and guarantee I'll make YOU into a KARATE [illegible] hours or every cent you paid for my information will be refunded!

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With KARATE you can disarm an opponent rushing you with his fists, a broken bottle, a revolver or any kind of bludgeon. You can turn an aggressor's attack into your advantage with only your bare hands, your arms and your legs.

What *would* you do if you were insulted by a bully? . . . or if 3 or 4 hoodlums passed remarks about your girl? . . . or if you were suddenly mugged from behind? . . . or if someone came at you with a baseball bat? If you're like millions of other Americans, you'd be absolutely helpless—and you'd be ashamed, humiliated, robbed, beaten, kicked—and pitiful in the eyes of your girl or friends.

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You can calmly watch a bully come at you with clenched fists—and see him sail over your head without having had any contact with him other than with the *sole of your shoe!* When you complete my instructions, you'll be ready for ANYONE—for ANY emergency—and you will feel supremely confident of being able to handle any situation perfectly.

In fact, a knowledge of KARATE will turn you into a NEW MAN even if you never actually have to use it! For you will become self-assured and completely confident of yourself and your ability to handle yourself. You will walk with a determined and confident step . . . you'll look any man in the eye . . . and you'll walk the streets with the knowledge that NOTHING can frighten you . . . that you can deal with any man, any weapon, any situation—and that you can do all this with NO bodily contact!

[illegible]

You owe it to your own peace of mind . . . to your loved ones . . . to be able to defend yourself in these days when attack may come at any time from hoodlums, criminals and "wise guys". So mail coupon below NOW for my complete Instruction on KARATE—for the amazingly low price of only 99c plus 26c for postage and handling. If you and your friends don't say KARATE has made a new man out of you, every cent will be refunded! PS If you order now—I'll include without extra charge your personal Membership Card in the American Karate Federation.

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Fantastic Four Fan Page

Send letters to: LEE and KIRBY
THE MARVEL COMICS GROUP
SECOND FLOOR 625 MADISON AV
NEW YORK, 10022, N. Y.

Dear Stan and Jack,
So, Ben Grimm is once again condemned to remain the Thing. This is not the first time Ben has been given hope, only to sink deeper into morbidity and despair of his physical appearance as the Thing. There have been many previous occasions when Ben suffered the same heartbreak. The letters in SPIDER MAN are filled with comments in rebuttal of the loser personality you have given him, yet Ben Grimm's situation is a thousand times as bad. At least girls look at Peter Parker and hope for a date, but Ben is completely alone. Of course you can state an inapplicable psuedo-philosophy in answer. You could say it's not a person's physical appearance that counts, it's what's inside him. Well, my friends, what is one of the greatest factors in shaping a person's personality? If someone looks like a movie star, he will obviously have self-confidence, but if he looks like a monster, afraid to look at himself in a mirror, how can he help feeling morbid? I have often heard the idealistic claim, it's not a person's appearance, it's his personality that makes him; but such an idealistic statement will not end Ben's grief! Changing into human form will! Since anything is possible in the world of fiction, there is no reason why you cannot have Reed, Henry Pym, or anyone else, for that matter, invent a serum which will give Ben back his handsome human form while at the same time retaining his super powers. I once read that fiction writers imitate gods in the manner in which they treat their fictional characters. I'm sure the Norsemen didn't want Odin and Thor to treat them the way you are treating Ben Grimm. Now did they? My vote is totally in favor of Ben returning to human form forever! I'm sorry that I always seem to be in oppostion to your plans of procedure in my letters. I guess it's easy to mention a few dislikes instead of stating the thousands of factors I approve of. Although I do disagree here and/there, in general I believe that Marvel is the greatest thing that has occurred in the history of literature past and present, with pictures to boot! This greatly aids the reader, the story becomes much clearer, there is much less strain on the imagination, which can often create a picture totally different from what the author intended. Marvel has set the trend; the tragicomic illustrated story will be the king of future literature. It is the least ambiguous and most satisfying of all forms. You have been paid many tributes and compliments in the past, but I would like to offer a simple thanks. Thank you Stan, Jack, Bullpen, for many hours of fine reading and visual enjoyment! Keep the faith!

Peter Marzano, 3619 S. 61 Ct.
Cicero, Ill. 60650

Dear Stan and Jack,
I've just read the October issue of the Fantastic Four. I've enjoyed Marvel comics for about 5 years, but this issue moved me to write. It's not usually (in fact, practically never) valid to use words like poignant, or powerful to describe a comic mag; but the last page of the issue, with Ben Grimm, now the Thing, walking away was very moving. The personal tragedy, and the unique characterization of Ben Grimm the Thing has always been a high point of Marvel, and this issue brought it to the highest level, in my personal opinion, that has ever been reached in the Marvel group. Thanks for the issue.

David Fuchs, East 22nd Street
Brooklyn, New York

Dear Stan and Jack,
Excluding the advertisements, the letters page, and the information boxes, do you realize that in F.F. #79 the dialogue reached approximately 2,532 words! Let me tell Artie how to handle a writer's cramp. Soak your tired letterer's hands in warm baking soda for one hour. Then you'll be ready for another 2,532 words. Keep working! The sky's the limit! Two thousand five hundred and thirty-two, six thousand, eight thousand, etc . . . .

Walt Desmand, 51 Fair Street
Wallingford, Conn. 06492

Dear Stan, Jack, et. al.,
After keeping my customary and psuedo-sophisticated graduate-school silence for all the years that I've been reading your mags, I finally feel compelled to write. F.F. #79 is . . . Maybe I shouldn't be writing after all — words fail me on the subject of F.F. #79. When I first read this particular issue, I was somewhat disappointed: first, after #78 I had envisioned a really huge battle in which the burden of saving Sue and her coming baby from someone-or-other fell squarely upon the powerless Ben Grimm; and second, I couldn't understand why Reed, Sue, Johnny, and Crystal occupied so much space in an issue devoted to Ben's decision. Well, now I'm kicking myself. The pages lavished on Reed and Sue, Johnny and Crystal are both masterful and essential to Ben's story. And the theme which ties it all together is love: the joy of Johnny and Crystal's love, and the deep sharing of responsibility in the love of Reed and Sue — these pictures of love highlight the awful decision that Ben has to make, and Ben's self-sacrifice completes the work that is begun in these pictures. Gentlemen, this is great stuff! So here is one heart in advanced English studies that says to you — thanks.

RFO, KOF, Steve Donaldson, 345½ Cherry
Kent, Ohio

Dear Stan and Jack,
In reply to S.L. Cox's letter in F.F. #79, I offer this: If you condemn Galactus for what he does, you must also condemn the human race for destroying animals for food. It is all simply a matter of survival. Please keep in mind that we or other inhabitants of other worlds should not try to defend themselves. As for his statement in the same letter, "No single life, no matter the power or longevity of that entity, is worth the existence of millions, billions, trillions, or even a single other creature, just to insure its own existence." According to his statement we should not eat food (of any kind, except artificial) since we would be killing countless life cells.

H.R. Blanco, Jr., 3446 N.W. 17st.
Miami, Florida

KNOW YE THESE, THE HALLOWED RANKS OF MARVELDOM:

R.F.O. (REAL FRANTIC ONE)—A BUYER OF AT LEAST 3 MARVEL MAGS A MONTH

T.T.B. (TITANIC TRUE BELIEVER)—A DIVINELY-INSPIRED 'NO-PRIZE' WINNER

Q.N.S. (QUITE 'NUFF SAYER)—A FORTUNATE FRANTIC ONE WHO'S HAD A LETTER PRINTED.

K.O.F. (KEEPER OF THE FLAME)—ONE WHO RECRUITS A NEWCOMER TO MARVEL'S ROLLICKIN' RANKS.

P.M.M. (PERMANENT MARVELITE MAXIMUS)—ANYONE POSSESSING ALL FOUR OF THE OTHER TITLES.

F.F.F. (FEARLESS FRONT FACER)—AN HONORARY TITLE BESTOWED FOR DEVOTION TO MARVEL ABOVE AND BEYOND THE CALL OF DUTY.

Dear Stan and Jack,
In reading Fantastic Four #79 I noticed that Alicia looked very strange. No!—Please, Thing, I didn't mean it that way! Don't hit me, Ben, PLEASE! . . . WHEW!!! That was close! I meant that she looked different, but just as gorgeous as ever. (That's O.K., Ben, I accept your apology.) I noticed that her hair was dark brown instead of the tannish-orange we have grown to know and love. "My chance for a no-prize" I said. Then I thought of the limitless number of fans Marvel had, and knew that even if you did print my letter you would say that a woman has a right to change her appearance, and eleven times out of ten does. But why would a blind girl change her hair style and color? She couldn't appreciate it herself or the admiring glances of passers-by. Then I knew: for Ben. But why didn't she tell Ben? Then, using my brain (the equal of which is possessed only by that genius of geniuses, Irving Forbush), plus my ever-growing collection of F.F., (not to mention my uncontrollable desire to own a super-deluxe, diamond-studded, gold-plated no-prize), I deduced the facts and reconstructed the crime . . . oops, I mean the chain of events. It occurred thusly: Alicia made the change, then decided to give it a trial run. She went shopping uptown, using her wits and well-developed sense of hearing to give the impression that she wasn't blind. Alicia's new look first appeared in F.F. 61, on page 14, the first panel. Well - accustomed to the Torch's fiery flight and, hearing footsteps behind her, she yelled "Look! Isn't that — the Human Torch??!" After listening to the battle between the F.F. and the Sandman, she went home and washed the hair coloring out of her hair, being satisfied that the new style was complimentary, but not sure that Ben would like it. Two months later, she decided to try it again (Ish#63,page 5, panel 3, with a red, fur-trimmed outfit), but came to the same conclusion. Once more, now hooked on the idea, she turned brunette (check the top, left-hand corner of the 2nd panel on page 11 of the Silver Surfer story in the F.F. SPECIAL #5 . . . Whew! After that sentence I'm out of breath.) After thinking it over she gave it up permanently, she thought. She finally decided to change it back to brown and ask Ben his opinion of it. But she was so surprised to really see Ben Grimm instead of the Thing, in ish #79, that she forgot to say anything and he didn't notice (he must have been blinder than Alicia). What does the future hold in store for Marvel's newly-acquired brunette bombshell? Did I earn my super-deluxe, diamond-studded, gold-plated no-prize with all of the trimmings? Oh, well, at least I went down trying. Say hello to Cousin Irving for me. What?!? You're so proud of Honest Irv that you'll give me a no-prize just for being related to him? Oh! You're giving it to me for reading Stan's letter about Al Jaffee in Mad's new paperback "Snappy Answers to Stupid Questions!" Oh, well, at least you're giving it to me. Excelsior!

Rusty Kirkland, 1103 Glenwood Dr.
Augusta, Georgia 30904

Dear Stan and Jack,
I've been waiting a year for Reed and Sue to have their child, and now that the event is so very close, I cannot contain myself much longer. It's funny, when Marvel had the mentor of the X-Men killed off, I could not understand why people wrote in letters of grief when he was only a fictitious character. It's like when Smilin' Jack was lost at sea and the Coast Guard was bombarded with letters asking them to find the intrepid flyer. Perhaps my lack of understanding was a result of the incomplete characterization of the professor. I couldn't feel any compassion for him. He simply wasn't real. Such is the case with most of your characters. I enjoy their adventures, the trials and tribulations of their lives, but they just aren't real. One of the reasons for your one-dimensional characters is that they thrive on action and danger. There is little personal characterization other than the basic love triangles and individual personalities as far as they go. When these "people" get into their costumes, they are almost identical — fearless, wisecracking, and victorious. One of the reasons that the Fantastic Four has survived so long is that the stories are about real people. There are no gods or millionaire playboys. Ben, Johnny and Sue are three normal people thrust into impossible situations, but they never lose their characterizations. Reed is the stereotyped scientist, but he is bombarded with a realistic concern over his wife and child, rather than girl problems, a doting aunt, or other Peter Parker problems which pale at the comparison. Of all the comic book characters in the history of comic magazines, the most realistic and delightful are the F.F. There are readers who dislike the mushy stuff and want twenty-odd pages full of action and fighting. This would ruin the FF and most of your other magazines, as life is not all rough and tumble. Marvel's claim to fame has been to portray realistic characters with impossible powers in logical stories. Given a character, you have the story as it would happen to the particular character. With the child, I'm hoping that Reed and Sue will act like normal parents despite their "impossible" battles, and that the Fantastic Four continues to be the world's greatest comic magazine. I'm not sure I've said what I wanted very clearly, but I tried. You'll hear from me the moment I finish the F.F. SPECIAL.

Terry Levin, 9055 Nilescenter Rd.
Skokie, Ill. 60016

Dear Stan and Jack,
This is only the second time I have written you miraculous Marvel madmen. But the contents of both my letters are extremely different from each other. My first letter, which was right after reading F.F. #12, was to compliment you on the superb work. My second letter, this one, is to tell you that the F.F. is really slipping! The FF has been one of my favorite mags all through the seven years I've been reading comics! But lately it's lost what it had way back in the days of F.F. #12. I've seen many fans write in and give you advice which you kindly accept, but (at least I don't think so) you fellows don't follow their advice. After all, we read the comics, we ought to know what we want to read! I'd be glad if you brought back some of the good old foes like the Super Skrull or the Frightful Four, of course, with some new member which would be absolutely marvelous! (The only kind of character Marvel can produce——marvelous!) Or how about a slam-bang fight with the Hulk again! I want to see a foe where it takes more brawn than brains to fight! Galactus and Psycho-Man are okay, but let's get a villain where Ben can really go to it! How about it, you merry Marvel madmen?

Mike Christiansen, 704 South Third St.
Rockford, Illinois 61108

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Norman Rockwell—America's most beloved artist. He is a founder and member of the Guiding Faculty of the Famous Artists School.

'We're looking for people who like to draw'

says Norman Rockwell

Today hundreds of men and women who never thought they could be artists are working at easels and drawing boards, making pictures and getting well paid for it. They all can thank a group of famous artists who have devoted much of their time and talent to helping others find success in art.

Some of the people the Famous Artists have helped

Carl Kock was an 18-year-old apprentice in a Chicago art studio when he enrolled. Today he prepares ads for such companies as General Motors and Firestone—has won five gold medals.

Howard Sanden of Minneapolis took the Course while still in high school. He is now a successful artist—recently he and his wife traveled through Europe and the Middle East on important art assignments.

Paul Sullivan enrolled at 14. His Famous Artists training helped him work his way through college.

Kathleen Gironda of Indiana, Pennsylvania, was an 18-year-old salesgirl in a department store. She still works for a department store, but now it's as an advertising artist and fashion illustrator.

With Famous Artists training James Ryan, formerly a clerk, has become an illustrator at Hughes Aircraft—and turns out a steady stream of well-paying free-lance artwork in his spare time.

Oregon housewife Helen Tryk lives 150 miles from the nearest big city. But she does fashion illustration, has her own studio, runs an art work shop, does portraits.

A plan to help others

It started over 18 years ago when a group of America's most successful artists—men like Albert Dorne, Norman Rockwell, Jon Whitcomb, Al Parker and Stevan Dohanos—met in New York City. They knew that all over America there were people who liked to draw who could be turned into good artists. Albert Dorne asked, "Why can't we give these people the training they need—including all the trade secrets and know-how we've learned over the years?"

He suggested a new kind of art school—a home study art school—that would give talented people the best professional art training, no matter where they live.

The famous artists agreed. Taking time from their busy careers, they created a remarkable series of art lessons covering every aspect of drawing and painting. They illustrated their lessons with over 5,000 "here's-how" illustrations. The lessons start from scratch and cover every skill a top artist needs. Finally, they developed a wonderful way to give each student personal correction and advice all through his training.

The famous artists with the School are not surprised at the success of their students. The opportunities open to successful artists today are enormous. The School continually gets calls from all over the country asking for practical well-trained students—not geniuses—who can step into full-time or part-time art jobs. And practical, thorough training is what the School offers.

Famous Artists Talent Test

To find others with art talent worth developing, the Famous Artists created a 12-page Talent Test. Thousands paid to take this test, but now the School offers and grades it free. Men and women who do well on the test—or offer other sufficient evidence of art talent—may enroll in the School. But there's no obligation. Simply mail the coupon below.

Founding Faculty of the Famous Artists School

Norman Rockwell
Jon Whitcomb
Al Parker
Stevan Dohanos
George Giusti
Peter Helck
Fred Ludekens
Ben Stahl
Robert Fawcett
Austin Briggs
Harold Von Schmidt
Albert Dorne

Famous Artists School
Studio A 5949
Westport, Conn. 06880

I would like to find out whether I have art talent worth developing. Please send me, without obligation, your Famous Artists Talent Test and information about your courses.

Mr. / *Mrs.* / *Miss* ________ ← *Circle one and please print*

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Age ________ *Zip* ________

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